



BLM News

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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VEHICLE USE IN WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS CLARIFIED

A recent notice published in the *Federal Register* clarifies the use of mechanized vehicles, including trail and mountain bikes, in Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) in the Elko Field Office area in northeast Nevada. This is not a change, a new limitation, or a new closure. These WSA management guidelines discussed here have been this way since BLM's recommendations went to Congress in 1991.

The following Wilderness Study Areas are now designated as **Limited Use**: Cedar Ridge, Red Spring, Little Humboldt, Rough Hills, South Fork Owyhee River, Owyhee Canyon, Bluebell, Goshute Peak, South Pequop, and Bad Lands WSA. Limited Use means that persons operating mechanical transport, as well as trail and mountain bikes, are limited to accessing *only those boundary roads or ways existing inside a Wilderness Study Area, which were identified during the inventory phase of the wilderness review* (1979-1981). Maps depicting those open roads within each Wilderness Study Area are available at the Elko Field Office and on Elko BLM's web page at www.nv.blm.gov/elko/recreation. All other ways and roads in the Wilderness Study Areas are not open to mechanized vehicles. Roads and trails outside of WSAs are open. The WSAs constitute about 3% of land managed by the BLM Elko Field Office.

BLM Elko Field Manager Helen Hankins said, "The issue of Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use on public lands is becoming more important every day - both nationally and in Nevada. OHV use in Wilderness Study Areas has been confusing and we felt it would be helpful for the public to clarify the issue."

"The reason for the Limited Use designation is that BLM is required by Congress to maintain the Wilderness Study Areas in a character so as not to impair their suitability to be designated as Wilderness Areas if Congress chooses to do this. The recommendations for Wilderness Study Areas in Nevada were sent to Congress in 1991," Hankins continued.

Exemptions to the Limited Used designation may be granted for certain situations:

- in emergencies and search and rescue operations;
- for official purposes by the BLM and other Federal, State, and local agencies and their agents when necessary and specifically authorized the BLM for protection of human life, safety, and property; for protection of the lands and their resources; and
- to build or maintain structures and installations authorized as grand-fathered uses or valid existing rights in the Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review, as long as such use of vehicles is determined to satisfy the non-impairment criteria and is only along routes authorized and specified by the BLM.

For more information about OHV designations or Wilderness Study Areas in northeast Nevada, contact Tamara Hawthorne, Outdoor Recreation Planner, at the BLM Elko Field Office (775) 753-0356.

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